



Bayou Darter

(Etheostoma rubrum)

Quick Facts

- Bayou darter (*Etheostoma rubrum*) was listed in 1975 as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.
- The bayou darter is endemic to Mississippi, meaning it is found in no other states but Mississippi.
- The bayou darter is found only in Bayou Pierre River and its tributaries: White Oak Creek, Foster Creek, and Turkey Creek.
- The darter prefers stable gravel riffles or sandstone exposures with large sized gravel or rock.
- Bayou darters eat aquatic insects and feed primarily on midges, black flies, water mites, caddisflies and mayflies
- Habitat loss or degradation has been a major contributor to the reduction in bayou darter numbers.



Shallow water flowing over gravel riffles is preferred darter habitat, credit USFWS/Daniel Drennen.



Male bayou darter in breeding color; credit Stephen T. Ross, *Inland Fishes of Mississippi*.

Description

The bayou darter is a small fish reaching a maximum total length of 63 mm (2.5 inches). Males are usually larger than females. Nonbreeding darters are shades of brown with a white to light green belly. At the base of the caudal or tail fin there are two dark spots and a dark outer edge stripe. The belly of breeding males turns turquoise-blue while the female's belly is light blue.

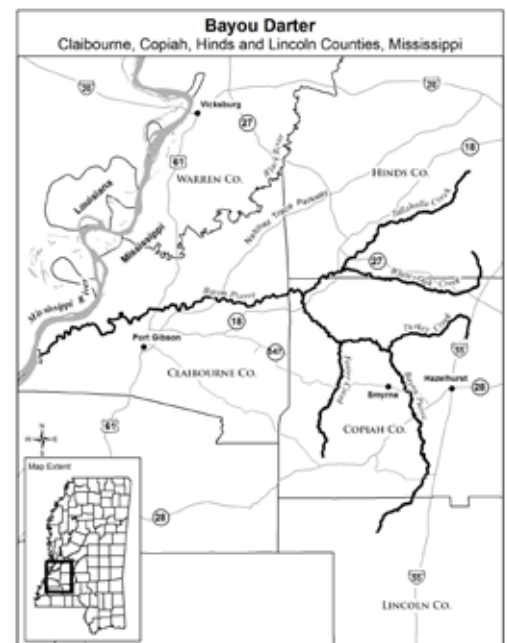
She has rows of black spots on all her brown colored fins. The dorsal, caudal and anal fins of the male are light brown at the base then have a broad red band in the middle and a clear to very light brown outer edge. His pectoral and pelvic fins are light red to red-orange at the base and clear near the outer edge.



Non-breeding bayou darter in October; credit USFWS/Terri Jacobson.

Range

The bayou darter is found only in Bayou Pierre River and its tributaries: White Oak Creek, Foster Creek, and Turkey Creek in Copiah, Claiborne and Hinds counties in southwestern Mississippi.





Bayou darter habitat, credit USFWS/Scott Wiggers.



Off road vehicles disturb and destroy darter habitat, credit USFWS/Daniel Drennen.

Habitat

Bayou darters prefer shallow water, swiftly flowing over gravel riffles or sandstone exposures with large sized gravel and rock. During floods, these darters take shelter by logs and boulders. Sometimes, larger darters are found in areas of swift current in aquatic vegetation along steep banks.

Threats

All aquatic animals need clean water, including the bayou darter. Erosion and siltation is caused by gravel mining, off-road stream riding, clearing of vegetation along stream banks, and other poor land management decisions. Top soil and silt washing into streams covering darter habitat, making it unsuitable, and the silt can suffocate fish, mussels and other aquatic animals. In addition, head cutting upstream causes stream side erosion further downstream.

How You Can Help

The bayou darter is unique as it is only found in Mississippi. By stabilizing the river habitat for the darter we are preserving our state's aquatic heritage for future Mississippians.



Bank erosion hurts landowners property values, causes water quality problems and harms darter habitat, credit USFWS/Terri Jacobson.



Cottonwood plantings help stop bank erosion, credit USFWS/Scott Wiggers.



Careless gravel mining destroys darter habitat and destabilizes the river causing erosion, credit USFWS/Daniel Drennen.



Private landowner proud to have the threatened bayou darter on his property, credit USFWS/Terri Jacobson.



- Restore native vegetation along cleared stream banks to stabilize and prevent erosion.
- Maintain a riparian, vegetative buffer edge along all streams in the Bayou Pierre watershed.
- Allow cattle limited access to streams.
- Keep off road vehicles out of rivers and streams.
- Retain top soil by contour planting on slopes and in flood plains.
- Enforce restrictions of careless sand and gravel mining in or near bayou darter habitat.
- Practice erosion control, maintain riparian buffers and improve pre-planning of road and bridge placement and road maintenance.
- Support bayou darter population monitoring.
- Join the Bayou Pierre Watershed Enhancement Group's efforts to preserve water quality and landowner property values.

For More Information

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